

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 21, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 23 St. Aubyne Road, Upper Norwood, August 21, (1878) My dear Mrs. Bell:

You will be surprised to hear from me so soon again but I have some questions to ask which I would like answered as soon as you conveniently can and then I have a request to make, that you will be so kind as to send the enclosed little socks to Lily with my love, I do not know her address myself. I feel as though I owed an apology for sending even this little gift now for I did not give either her Carries or Lauries little boy anything but since I first expected to become a Mother all my friends have been so very kind in sending me pretty little or big things for my baby, that I feel as though I wanted to do the same by all my own and Alec's friends.

Now for my questions; When does Mr. Bell intend going on that lecturing tour to Kingston and how long will you be gone?

We have engaged rooms on the "Abyssinia" leaving Liverpool on the 12th. of October. We may have to wait until the 26th., to give Alec the opportunity of lecturing in Oxford as Mr. Max Muller proposed, but at all events as soon as we arrive in New York, Alec's first thought will be to be with you as speedily as possible. So we should like to know if you would like to have us all go to Canada at once or wait awhile. I only fear after November Alec will find business to tie him to one place so that it will be impossible for him to pay you the long visit he has so long looked forward too. I hope you will not think me presumptuous in taking it for granted that you would like to have us all for a long visit, though you have not invited us, but if there is hardly room for a baby and nurse in your home we could easily stay in town and come out to see you every day. Alec is so homesick for his Mother and Father and we both want you to have a good look at our little one. However, if you

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are to be away we must wait and Alec will only run up alone for while. My next question is, if Mary Home is willing to have the 2 terrors of a journey over the Ocean, would you and Mr. Bell like to have her with you. Both Alec and I hate to leave her here alone utterly friendless for she has lost sight of her sister and we found her living in a very poor way. We have not said anything to her about it, but Alec feels almost sure she would prefer going to being alone. We could not afford to bring her with us, the more as I must have a Nurse to carry my heavy little Elsie for me, but Alec thinks with a little help Mary could pay her own passage. Alec says you offered to take her with you and thinks you might still like her. My maid, Bessie, cannot come back with us as she is engaged to be married — though I think she has a great hankering to see a little of the world. She is perfectly devoted to the baby but a very judicious nurse and both baby and I will feel her lose very much, however, it can't be helped and I have advertised for a Nurse to go to America. She is to call at our house tomorrow and if I cannot leave Elsie, Mamma will go in town. She will have to come for a months trial and four servants in our little house will be a great inconvenience as well as a drain on Alec's purse, but I am still not very strong and must have some one to carry the baby on the Steamer, besides which we think it will be cheaper in the end to pay a Nurses fare and then have her bound to us for a certain length of time at the salary she would receive here, but which would be much less than that an American girl would expect.

Where do you think your son is, in no less a place than Dublin. After all I believe I wrote he was going, but he drew back afterwards and we were never sure that he would go until her started. However he is now very thankful to be there and assured he did his duty in going. I am feeling very indignant over a long article in the Times carefully designed not only to rob Alec of all credit to his own invention, but giving the impression that, he is a thief of other peoples ideas. I feel pretty sure Mr. Preece wrote it, though just why he should turn around on Alec so I don't know and a letter just received from Alec mentions him as having brought a party of Telegraphic gentlemen to see him. From Alec's letter he seems not to have a spare moment to himself all day long. He says, 3 "Sunday afternoon

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had a very pleasant time at Lord Gouglin, Monday — I was at the Association from 10 until 3 listening to stiff papers and occasionally taking part in discussions. In the afternoon formed one of a party who drove down to Kingston for the purpose of examining the new Ironclad recently purchased from the Turkish Government,” “reached Dublin again only in time for dinner, then dressed for Prof. Dewars lecture — (he is growing his beard now so guess it did not take him long to dress)” “After lecture talked science with a select party of Professors, and Professor Sylvanus Thomson and I kept it up until one. This morning commenced by hearing papers on the microphone as a means of detecting the diffusion of gasses, took part in the discussions. Was then entrapped into the department of Physical Science, and had to sit for more than half an hour listening to “On cubic surfaces referred to a Pentad of Cotangential Points”, followed by interesting papers in the discussion of which I could take a part. Dined with the Red Lion Clubbe, dinner and speeches kept us quite late, afterwards Mr. Preece and a Telegraphic party came up to my room and discussed electricity and after that Prof. Sylvanus Thomson and I talked right-angled themes and electrical and magnetical doctrines till a few minutes ago. It is now half past one. ? “Programme for tomorrow, Association till 3, at 3:30 Brother Welch,” (Principal of the Irish Deaf and Dumb Institution near Dublin) “is to meet me and we go together to visit the Industrial School sustained by the Brotherhood, in the evening dine with Dr. Brady, Thursday I join an excursion to the Vale of Avoca and to examine some peculiar system of managing Orphan Homes etc. and to dine with Earl somebody or other.” He does not know when he will return, I hope not until the end.

Now I think my letter is more than long enough, please excuse it and believe me, with love to Mr. Bell and the Miss Symonds.

Affectionately your Daughter, Mabel. I must not forget to say the Doctor came today, but the vessicles formed by the vaccination on Elsie's arm were so small that he could get no 4 lymph from them. The child is well and happy and subjected him to a most searching examination, her pretty eyes wide open, gradually she edged nearer him on my lap, and finally got his fingers in her mouth. She was not a bit shy though he was of course a

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stranger to her. The Doctor says my Sister is doing nicely and gaining flesh. He return home next week.